

Belmont Warrant Committee Meeting Minutes
FINAL
April 4, 2012, 7:30 p.m.
Chenery Community Room

Present: Chair Allison; Members Becker, Brusch, Grob, Libenson, Lynch, Manjikian, McLaughlin, Millane, Sarno; Selectman Jones; School Committee Representative Slap

Members Absent: Baghdady, Dash, Epstein, McHugh

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm by Chair Allison.

Chair Allison began by reviewing the evening's agenda and turning to the first item on the agenda.

Warrant Review for April TM

Chair Allison noted that the Warrant Committee will review the Warrant in its entirety first, then decide which articles it will need to report on.

Chair Alison noted that Article 3 – Authorization to Transfer Balances – is a routine article and that the WC will report favorable action on it. Furthermore, the following Articles will be dealt with at the May TM and so will not be dealt with this evening: 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 13.

Regarding Article 12, which pertains to the Community Preservation's budget, Chair Allison asked if this was an April or May item. Member Brusch said they are requesting funding for an Administrative Assistant.

Regarding Article 15, which pertains to the Landfill Stabilization Fund, Selectman Jones noted that it is time to act on this issue. He said that this article allows for the site analysis and cap design to go forward.

Article 16 pertains to the Trapelo Road and Belmont Street improvements. Chair Allison asked if this would require the appropriation of funds. Members noted that it called for acquisitions of property by purchase and so required a report by the WC.

Article 17, the Minuteman School Stabilization Fund, requests a report and thus will be discussed. It was agreed that Belmont's representative to Minuteman, Jack Weiss, be asked to meet with the committee.

Article 18 requests a by-law change to allow for electronic voting at TM. Chair Allison noted that this article would come through the Capital Budget Committee (CBC). Member Brusch confirmed this, and added that the by-law change would need to come

before the CBC grants the funding. It will cost around \$19K for the electronic clickers and the CBC is in favor of it.

Article 19, the Demolition by-law, is an article that does have an economic impact and, as such, warrants WC discussion. Chair Allison then noted some of the points of this article that have remained the same since it was first introduced last fall. Since this article was previously submitted, the Committee will request a red-lined version of the article.

Member Manjikian asked if there would be a substation update at TM (by the Board of Selectmen). Selectman Jones and Chair Allison agreed that it would be good to have an update prepared. Selectman Jones will raise the question at the next meeting of the BMLD Advisory Board.

Having reviewed the Warrant, Chair Allison then returned to Article 12, which pertains to the Community Preservation's budget, noting that the WC will need a budget of what is going to be spent on administrative costs and what will be the return on the money spent. The WC discussed this Article very briefly.

On Article 15, the Landfill Stabilization Fund, Chair Allison noted that this is related to the Incinerator Site. Selectman Jones said that there are a range of options for capping the site, ranging from \$3.3M to \$4.8M depending on the future use of this space. The WC discussed the Article briefly, noting that this initial appropriation (\$800K) will be for site analysis and cap design and that the capping process needs to begin now. However, Selectman Jones stated, if the state does indeed own this land, then they should pay to cap it. Member Lynch said that we may not want to appropriate any money until the title is clear. The WC discussed the title issue.

Selectman Jones said that the Board is thinking about a playing field for this space as a needed and an affordable option. Member Millane asked whether CPA funds could assist with paying for a playing field.

Chair Allison confirmed that the \$4.1M in the stabilization fund could be used for this purpose. Selectman Jones said that there may be an issue of hazardous waste on this site as well. He will check with the DEP. Member Grob questioned the advisability of paying for "design of the cap" without some guidance as to purpose, since the required cap will depend on the intended use.

As for Article 17, the Minuteman School Stabilization Fund, Selectman Jones said this Article may relate to a roof problem at Minuteman. Member Bruschi said there are many unanswered questions regarding this request. The WC created the following list of questions that will need to be addressed and discussed:

- How many member-towns have to say 'no' to stall this?
- Does it require a unanimous vote to move forward?
- Is this an annual (a replenishable) revolving fund?
- What is the requested funding for?

- How much money is required?
- How was that amount arrived at?
- What formula is used to divvy up the final cost?
- Why is this being moved forward now?
- What is the fiscal trigger for requesting funding from member-towns?

Chair Allison said she will forward these questions to Belmont's Minuteman representative, Mr. Jack Weiss. Selectman Jones asked that Mr. Weiss come prepared to discuss the enrollment study as well.

The WC then discussed Article 19, the Demolition Delay By-Law. The WC raised several questions, including: how many significant buildings would be impacted by this? Chair Allison noted that this question is almost impossible to answer and is left in the hands of the Historic District Commission (HDC). Member Lynch offered that this article would require an enforcement mechanism that will cost the town money. It was established that most of Belmont's buildings are over 50 years old. Member Grob said that the 12-month waiting period seems overly long and that, in Boston, the waiting period is 90 days.

Member Sarno noted that the HDC may need to create a list of buildings that this would pertain to. Member Bruschi said that municipal buildings are intentionally not exempt from this. She said this article will cause all sorts of concerns on many levels.

Chair Allison noted that there is a financial impact to this article and that this article gives a large amount of authority to the HDC over a large swath of the town.

The WC generated the following questions, which will be forwarded to the HDC:

- What has been changed in this article since last fall?
- On which town, if any, was the language of this article based?
- Is there a severability clause?

Member Lynch suggested assigning WC members to work with the HDC on the WC's concerns.

DPW Reserve Fund Transfer (RFT) request

Member McLaughlin provided a report on the request. He noted that it fully met the criteria for a reserve funds transfer request, as it was both unforeseen and unexpected in nature. Mr. Castanino, DPW Director, said he has used his street maintenance budget to cover these expenses. The DPW is not requesting the entire amount of the expenses incurred, just what is needed until the end of the year. Mr. Castanino has requested reimbursement from FEMA; if this funding comes through, the money will be returned to the RFT fund.

The WC briefly discussed this request, as well as what was left in the RFT account, and Chair Allison reviewed the RFT fund balance and requests to date thus far.

Member McLaughlin moved: To support the DPW's RFT request in the amount of \$62,978.

The motion passed unanimously.

Subcommittee Updates

Culture and Recreation: Member Lynch distributed a draft report for the WC. He highlighted some areas where cost savings could occur, e.g., reducing the number of library part-time staff who are receiving benefits. He spoke to the COA, Health, and Recreation consolidation issue. He suggested the Board should analyze this area going forward.

Regarding operations, the Health Department is now doing web-based inspections. The Library's circulation expenses remain a large portion of the budget. The COA's expenses exceed the fees that are collected; transportation remains a large portion of their budget. He then reviewed the highlights of the COA's budget, including a 10-month social worker position who receives a full year salary. Additional funding is usually allocated during these two months to cover social work.

The Health Department's observations include that fees have been added for inspections. The shared nurse position (with Lexington), he said, is working out well.

For Recreation, the pool is a large amount of the budget. He noted that Recreation is now sharing resources with the COA. Fees have been increased for their programs (by 17% across the board) and they are considering rink advertising, which could generate \$8-\$10K.

Selectman Jones asked about the 10-month social worker position for which a 12-month salary is paid. Member Lynch noted that the town needs this to be a 12-month position.

Member McLaughlin commented on the COA's budget and observed that certain areas of the budget are not well illuminated.

Member Manjikian asked about the COA's new van and the potential regionalization with Lexington. Member Lynch said it did not go through: Lexington retained its own van.

Member Becker asked if it is known who is coming and going at the Beech Street Center. Member McLaughlin agreed that it is not at all clear how many are visiting the center and how accurate the counts are. Member Lynch agreed that this issue has been raised repeatedly and that there have been some improvements but the picture remains incomplete.

Chair Allison noted that the Library card ensures that good data is collected regarding Library usage. Chair Allison asked about the reported 13% usage of the Recreation Department: is this unduplicated? Member Grob said the 13% includes adults, and that it was unduplicated. Chair Allison noted that the total budget for COA, Health, and Recreation together is just slightly over \$1M.

Education: No update

General Government: No update.

Public Safety: Member Libenson said they are presently looking at the head-count issue.

Public Works: No update.

Review of Investment Requests/New Programs, Town Departments

Chair Allison distributed a handout illustrating the new initiatives requested on the town side, including both requests that were incorporated into the Town Administrator's January available revenue budget and some that have been subsequently submitted by the department heads. She noted that many of these items are recurring costs, i.e., adding more people. This document is intended for the subcommittees to use; they are investments that the town is being asked to make.

BOS, Planning Board and SC Updates

Selectman Jones: The Board will meet on Monday to discuss several budget issues, including the additional departmental requests, a stabilization fund for SPED, a revolving account for "orphan" items, as well as a policy for OPEB.

SC Rep. Slap: She reported that, following discussions with the Town Accountant and Town Treasurer, the final estimated one-time cash adjustments total is \$505K. SC Chair Graham said the SC is meeting Monday with the Board, and will host its public hearing on Tuesday.

Public Contributions

Mr. Joel Samuels, Chair of the COA Board, said he stands ready to answer any questions raised by the Culture and Recreation subcommittee.

Wrap Up/Announcements

Chair Allison noted that the TM letter has been distributed. There are 18 newly-elected TM members and they have been invited to attend a TM tutorial. She said she will be discussing the deliverable schedule with subcommittee chairs. Subcommittee recommendations will be discussed at the April 18 meeting. With the League of Women

Voters, two Warrant Briefings will be held at the Beech Street Center: one on April 19, and one on May 10 (on budget topics).

Selectman Jones said that once the new Town Administrator is appointed, he hopes to move forward on the consolidation of the COA, Recreation, and Health. He said 79 resumes were received for the TA position, and it has been narrowed down to ten. He said it is a good crop of applicants.

Approval of Minutes for 3/28/2012

The minutes of 3/28/2012 were approved with minor adjustments.

Adjournment

Member McLaughlin moved to adjourn at 9:11 pm.

Submitted by Lisa Gibalerio
WC Recording Secretary